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177

1. In her Notes sur la théodicée Bambara, Mrs. S. de Ganay has given a first version of the creation in which Koni (alias Pemba), conceived of as the only creator, gives birth to "female twins in the divine substance," Mousso Koroni and Faro respectively, the latter seen in his female aspect. This version is in line with Bambara thought which sees creation as founded on the principle of duality.

The version presented here is of interest because it is absolutely comparable to the Dogon creation myth and takes into account the identity of representations among both tribes. Indeed, in the Dogon myth, creative thought (the god Amma), having formed the "egg of the world," splits it into two placentae (me), each containing one of the Nommo twins, bearers of his word charged respectively with the creation of sky and earth. The same is true of Faro and Pemba (see p. 31). But the Nommo of the earth, having lost his female double, was transformed into an animal desperately seeking his double. As a result, disorder was introduced and the Nommo of the sky was charged with putting the confusion into order. To do this, he recognized the universe, reclaiming from the other Nommo the words Amma had entrusted him with. Among the Bambara, the same roles of Pemba, Mousso Koroni, and Faro are found.

To elaborate on this, Pemba and the balanza have their counterparts in the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) and the senge (Acacia albida), Mousso Koroni in the female being Yasigui, twin of yurugu, now represented by a dignitary of the Mask Society, the yasigine. Yasigui, like Mousso Koroni, revealed the words of the creator, that is, the language of Sigui. She circumcised and excised men and women and

773 taught certain agricultural techniques. In both tribes, the same star, Sirius (called sigi toto by the Dogon; sigi doto by the Bambara), represents them. The androgynous Faro is comparable in all ways to the Nommo, the universal monitor, custodian of the word and of life. The yurugu and the Nommo made voyages similar to those of Pemba and Faro. In particular, at the time of their descent on earth, the yurugu, and later the Nommo, used an "ark," horo, whose counterparts are Pemba's wood pembele and Faro's ark kuru, described by certain initiates (see M. Griaule, L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes. /The ark of the world among Nigerian peoples/.

For both tribes, man "the seed of the world," is the image of the cosmos. The exact role of the seed of the Acacia albida does not appear clearly in the two myths, but in both cases, it is considered to be a first aborted creation.

Faro's Reign

773 Faro, having vanquished the balanza and overcome Téliko, took over the creation himself. He reorganized the whole universe and established the order under which it still functions today. /27/ He spread his word and his light; he named and classified all things: "All things (of the universe) are under the domination of Faro; eight hundred transformations are in his power" (1).

801 802 1. Fêw be be faro ka se kono, yelemani ba kele be a la a fe.

The number 800 which is "the end of the count," here expresses the infinite. In the so-called "eastern number system," now

773 west, klebi, the seat of customs and of good and beautiful things.

He then started off in the direction of the north, taking eight epochs to cross the spaces and the depths. He named the north baba, "great river," for the distance was great, the water deep, and the area difficult. In the north, which he reached in the ninth epoch, he established the seat of his control and that of all royalty.

He then went to the south where evil creatures who had listened to Mousso Koroni and followed her advice spoke a language they had stolen (1). The tried to resist Faro, but he destroyed great numbers

[171]

1. The Dogon have a similar notion of the theft of the language. See p. 47, n. 1.

of them. Although the survivors submitted to him, he made their domain the seat of impurity and named it /28/ bani, "little river," to emphasize their weakness and their shameful failure.

The itinerary was measured in palms, sibiri, the unit of measurement being 22 palms (2). The distance separating the cardinal points,

[804]

2. sibiri nye, literally "eye of the palm." The Bambara palm is a length obtained with an open hand, from the extremity of the thumb to the extremity of the middle finger.

the height of the sky and the depth of the earth were measured in the same way.

During the same period he determined the seasons and created the regular alternation of day and night to replace the premordial darkness. Having measured space, he created time.

Faro then placed himself in the center of the universe: still actuated by a vibratory movement, he traversed in a spiral turning from right to left up to the outer boundaries, "where there is no more than a trembling of the surface." Then he returned along the same route, going from left to right in order to "place himself at the central point (3) whence he distinguished between beings and things" (4).

3. It is said of this act, faro tyema yera; or faro sigi yoro seleke nani tyela. "Faro

773 Finally, he occupied himself with agriculture. In particular, he gave men, through the intermediary of the blacksmiths, the eight cereal grains that had been created simultaneously with man but had remained hidden in the sky (1). The eight grains became the basis

[171]

1. A myth parallel to this can be found among the Dogon (see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau). It makes the Bambara blacksmith into a civilizing hero, a metamorphosis of Faro, descended from the sky in an ark, kuru, and holding in his hand a mass containing the eight cereal grains. See M. Griaule, L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes; S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, pp. 194-196.

for subsistence and are fundamental to the human being who carried the symbol of them on his collar-bone (2).

[67] [243]

2. The eight grains are as follows: sanõ, small millet (Pennicillaria spicata); keninge, large millet (Sorghum gambicum); kende, red millet (Sorghum magaritiferum); fini, fonio (Digitaria exilis); syõ, beans (Vigna maniculata); tikaninkuru, peas; malo, rice. The names of the seeds vary, but the same symbols occur among the Dogon. In the Bozo myth, the collar-bone is the receptacle for eight fish, represented by symbols on the forward part of canoes. See G. Dieterlen. Les Correspondances cosmo-biologiques chez les Soudanais /Cosmic-Biological Correspondences among the Sudanese/.

Everything on earth is represented in the water: living beings by their doubles or witnesses, dya; plants and minerals by an exact replica, which enabled Faro to exert constant control over the existence and actions of the beings placed in his power.

He put spirits as his representatives everywhere in charge of watching over the universal order.

The Future Waters

773 The order of the universe prevails in space and time: the present order of things is but one phase thereof. When the "first running waters" covered the ground, Faro permitted only the primordial water to spread out; twelve waters remained hidden and they will rush forth and submerge the earth when he gives the order. The words they contain will be revealed and the "world to come" as thought out by yo will be realized.

Meanwhile, in the expectation of these "future waters," men must provide themselves with objects that will save them; the Bozo and some Bambara have canoes, shepherds have their gourds, spinners their spindles, and women their wooden stools (1). The coming /31/

[192] 1. It is significant that kuru (canoe), kuruni (spindle), and kuruni (stool) come from the same root. The word kuru designates the original globule in which Pemba descended, and which later became the wood pembele in the shape of a trough; it also designates the case or ark used by the mythical blacksmith, bearer of the nutritive seeds. See p. 53, n. 1. The word kuru should be compared to koro which, in the Dogon language, has the general meaning of case, box, wooden receptacle, trough, and canoe, and which also designates, among these people, the vessel in which the blacksmith descended. See M. Griaule. L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes, p. 117, n. 3.

[171]

of the waters is represented by a drawing on these objects as well as on a number of other everyday tools (Fig. 3).

773 524 This drawing serves as the framework for a game, the sumangolo, which the Bambara of all ages and both sexes play in order to "contribute to the progress of the world."

This game bears the name of the ancestor Soumangolo who traveled throughout the universe to find out and reveal to men "the

776 241 is represented as making her nocturnal visitation at the time the grain is threshed. An old woman, dressed in rags, wearing old unmatched sandals, and carrying broken gourds, runs about the countryside simulating madness. She follows the mythological itinerary from west to south and from east to north, and then returns and sits down near the granaries (1).

[171]

1. However, the very first agricultural techniques known as fyé ti (literally, cultivation of the wind) are recalled, particularly among the Bozo, by random sowings of a certain number of wild grasses, then cereals, in the fields where the harvest is offered to Faro. Similar rituals are celebrated in certain Bambara villages. The techniques taught by Mousso Koroni came after those "of the wind," and precede that of millet cultivation.

For information on some agricultural rituals of the Bozo, see G. Dieterlen, "L'Agriculture rituelle des Bozo /Ritual Agriculture of the Bozo/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 20 (1950).

776 857 Mousso Koroni's agricultural work and her unhappy wanderings are also represented in a children's ritual, carried out at night during the cultivation period. One of the players, the yukuri or dantoni (literally, little hunchback), wears sandals for ears, a hump at the small of his back, a cloth tail tied low about his waist. He goes begging from /40/ door to door, followed by all the uncircumcised of his neighborhood. He pretends to cultivate and to thresh grain while his companions intone chants recalling Mousso Koroni's mythical actions. After his round is finished and the presents of millet are gathered, the player, pursued by all the others, runs off and disappears amid catcalls.

776 241 TR3 But while this parody of cultivation, with its rituals and chants, recalls the phases of Mousso Koroni's disorderly life, the agricultural techniques she initiated earlier are in themselves an important expression of the reparation made to the confusions she had caused. Every hoeing by the farmer is a wound inflicted on the impure earth,

776 hence on Mousso Koroni. The ritual cultivation of millet, a noble
241 activity to which every aristocratic Bambara must dedicate himself,
783 is an institution which Faro taught in his time and constitutes a purification and a reordering of the soil (1).

1. Dugukolo be be dyuruma, "the whole earth is impure." But as only virgin soil is considered impure, it is also said: dyurumu be be dugukolo ka forow sani nyala do, "the whole earth is impure except for the cultivated fields." The word dugukolo (literally, bone of the earth) designates both the earth as a whole and the earth as matter. The same notions concerning the impurity of the earth hold for the Dogon. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 94.

[171]

Faro

Faro's Shapes

776 Faro was a "voice" before he materialized into a body. In his role as master of the word and reorganizer of the universe, he is represented by a spiral, munu, in which he occupies the point of origin at all times. The spiral is situated in the center of the cardinal points (2). Its vibratory unrolling represents "the displacement of

2. This "central point," which is also the firmament, is described by the Bambara as sa tyema kolo, literally, the bone of the middle of the sky.

Faro for the realization of all things in the universe."

776 This image is materialized in a basketry headdress, yugu, with a
292 spiral of eight turns. The straw sprigs that form the spokes supporting the spiral symbolize the vibration; the intervals, yugunye or eye of the yugu, which separate them are rays of light, the spiral representing

776 seized by Faro who, after giving the genitals to the dogfish, completed
773 his own physical being. His head and torso were made of the albino's flesh; his tail was of copper, as were his breasts, the "essential organs that fed and revived the world."

Faro's head can be compared to that of a white woman: his eyes are black and piercing; his hair is black, straight and long like a horsetail.

/42/ His ears are two holes with no outer ear, but are protected by two fins. Two necklaces of copper and gold hang from his neck and act as receivers, enabling him to hear all sounds and all words: the copper necklace reports idle talks of little importance; the gold one, secret conversations and powerful words. Faro puts all that the receivers collect in his fins, which are also the mirror reflecting all that his eyes have seen, both good or bad. He looks, shuts his eyes, and puts out his tongue; the images penetrate into his fins and classify themselves according to the regular movements of his tail. Thus, images and sounds are chronologically inscribed and can be brought before him at any moment "like a card pulled out of a file." In this way he knows to what use he can put things and events.

Both his hands—the right one male and the other female—and the end of his tail are webbed. Without any apparent sex, the preeminence of the feminine shape usually attributed to him recalls that he once impregnated himself in order to give birth to twin girls at the time the first waters streamed onto the earth.

Faro's appearance, which is linked to the problem of his origin, has been the object of legends and tales among the people. While these have attracted the scholar's attention, they present a serious problem. The legends are truncated, episodic, and often childish versions of an imposing myth, which is perfectly constructed and often expresses a dogma.

776 Two examples will be given of legends whose only interest here is
773 to suggest further research into myths forming the framework for
171 collective symbols. One of these legends is Peul /Fulani/, and the other Touareg /Tuareg/.

1. At a time when the Niger was but a narrow, deep river, a pregnant Peul woman asked some Bozo fishermen, who usually ferried people on request, to take her across the stream. At first they refused,

116 113 171 using her pregnancy as an excuse. As she insisted, they took her in their canoe, left her on the other shore, and went away.

As soon as she had landed, she was seized with pains of her labor. The water of the river dried up at the point where it had been deepest. A voice came out of it, advising the woman to bear her child there. She went down into the pit after having left her clothes on the shore.

From her womb there first came forth milk, honey, and precious stones (lulu) which dropped onto the milk and honey as though on /43/ a straw mat. The woman was writhing with pain: the child finally appeared feet first and fell on the stones. His hands and feet were webbed.

As the water began to reappear, she attempted to get away, but in vain. Her husband, who had run up to the river's edge and had found her clothing there, saw her appear three times holding the child above the waters. She then disappeared, carried away by the current. Both she and the child became Faro spirits.

2. The village of Siyango, located fifteen kilometers from Nyono, has a very deep, perennial natural well called ala kolo faro, Faro of the well of god, "or Mbata dyi," "water of Mbata." No one drinks its water. At the beginning of creation, a woman named Mbata lived alone and without water. She gave birth to twins. Exhausted and dying of thirst, she came out of the cave and, going down to the edge of the sand, prayed that God let her die if she could have no water. A spirit appeared and said to her: "God will entrust all waters to you; but he will first prepare you a home." A pit having been formed and filled with water, the woman stepped inside and was transformed into Faro. She then took her two children in with her; one became a male spirit and the other, a female spirit.

The pit extended underground through a kind of tunnel and Mbata, who had followed it down, came out again with so much water that the Niger was created.

The water of this well was soon forbidden to human beings, for if anyone looked at himself in it, Mbata would take hold of his shadow and make him fall. The corpse, using the underground passage, came out into the river. Those who threw themselves into the water sometimes also became Faro.

One day Mbata resumed her human shape and went to the market where she bought tomatoes. She asked those she met what they did for the spirit who owned the water they so much needed. She advised them to offer him copper and gold and to slaughter white rams at the well.

The following day, in order to give thanks to Faro, the villagers went to the edge of the well to the sound of drums and sacrificed the animal. The water swelled, seethed up, and formed a streat which still runs into the Niger today.

The composition of Faro's body determines the behavior of men in the rituals performed in his honor. While the usual offerings of blood, tomatoes, raw cereal mash, and baked cakes are consumed by him and returned to the givers in the shape of material possessions (children, millet, rain) or spiritual possessions (preservation of the souls of the living and the dead), the choice content of the offerings or sacrifices, the albino and copper, are reserved only for him and help increase his strength and stimulate his action. /44/ He absorbs them for his own sake; thus it is said that: "copper and albino are the sacrificial privileges of Faro."

Manifestations of Faro

All the atmospheric manifestations in the sky are evidence of Faro's presence and power. Rain, thunder, squalls, hail, and the rainbow all demonstrate his action. The lightning that bursts forth in the koblenkaba is a weapon, a small axe (sempere ni or dyele dɛ̃ čini) which he throws from the top of the sky. If lightning strikes, it is a proof of his revenge. In the tree, the lightning hits the gecko (ala ǰugu), an evil animal which, when it lives in homes near the hearth, supposedly stirs up fires of conflagration. When lightning strikes men, it is in punishment for the breaking of a taboo. The stone axes, found at the point where lightning strikes, are collected and kept in the sanctuaries of the rain altars, to be used in case of drought or in the course of seasonal rites. They are also placed in the seeded fields, so that their strength, by communicating itself to the seed, may be beneficial to germination.

On earth, Faro is conceived of as a unique being whose principal home is the Niger; he is present everywhere. In practice, the Bambara believe that a spirit haunts each torrent, pond, or well, each gourd of water, each dewdrop; they call him dyi tigi, "master of water."

826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental:
826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2). But the

2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on
801 earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

782
8:26
[71]

3. The mechanism of blood sacrifice among the Bambara is comparable to that observed among the Dogon and described by M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice dogon (Soudan Français) /Remarks on the Mechanism of Dogon Sacrifice (French Sudan)/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes. Vol. 10, 1940, pp. 127 ff.

the altar. At the time men gave the balanza their blood, they would let it dry and then, licking the trunk with their tongue, would reclaim it after it was rid of the element constituting the offering. All their active forces passed into the tree and a substance almost totally lacking in vitality was returned to them.

782 The blood sacrifices which were originally instituted on the trunk of the balanza are actually performed in the most varied sites: earth, trees, ponds, wells, etc. Moreover, as the Bambara developed their technology, they would sacrifice on those objects, utensils, or contrivances which they discovered or invented such as the forge and its tools, the loom, and agricultural implements.

782 The Bambara also have altars which may be classified into three categories:

778 1. The wood stumps called pembele, which represent Pemba. Many heads of families or of religious societies keep one of these (1).

1. See p. 77 for a description of the pembele altars.

A unique sanctuary at Massala is a pilgrimage center for Bambara from all regions who come in great numbers to take part in the annual sacrifice. Besides pembele, it contains two large pots, da, covered with sacrificial blood, which give the sanctuary its name. It is in this place that ordeals are executed, judicial questions settled, and serious illnesses treated.

2. The altars, made of stones crudely cut and occasionally engraved, have their origin in a mythical stone, issued out of the seventh part of the earth, and situated under the mound where Faro's female twins were born. Having a red color, it was itself a symbol of sacrifice. It divided itself and gave birth to all other sacrificial stones (Fig. 5 and Pl. V. b).

1: Dieterlen--137 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

/98/

Chapter 5

TECHNOLOGY

T13 The Bambara who are conscious of the evolution of their civilization trace it far back in time. The history of their origin as well as the feats and exploits of their most distant ancestors are not only inscribed in their memories but also in present day ceremonies and often in the material products of the culture, secular as well as religious.

The invention and evolution of technology, in the course of which the spiritual and the material, revelation and human effort, all work together, give rise to legends and representations which are characteristic of Bambara psychology (1).

1. What we relate here concerning the origin of technology is exclusively a summary of what the natives tell. The context, in the form of practical daily rituals, of which the forge is the best example, is sufficient and requires no commentary.

According to Bambara thought, all technology is an atonement taught man by Faro, a palliative to cosmic disorder, generally induced by a broken taboo. Famine, war, epidemics, misery, and death, which such disorders bring about, are compensated for —as far as possible—by new technologies which are revealed as needs arise. All these exist potentially in the wooden club used to smash and beat the fiber, which was the first raw material used (2).

●[71] 2. The wooden club is a duplicate of the mythical blacksmith's hammer which contained the techniques and the cultivable grains (see p. 53, n. 1). The same origin of technology is given by the Dogon, see Dieu d'Eau, p. 84.

T13 The first works were made by "primitive men," ancestors of the
829 Bambara of whom the following description is given:

knowing its power, men at first used it sparingly. A question was never discussed twice. If a request was reiterated, after an objection, the party requested would bow and agree at the risk and peril of the person making the request."

Men first lived by gathering and later by fishing and hunting without tools, using only /100/ hands to seize their prey, and nails and teeth to tear and cut it. Gradually this primitive life changed; technologies developed one by one according to a chronology which the present Bambara still remember.

The first raw material used, according to a tradition which is not confined to the Bambara alone, was the fiber of the nyama tree (1)

1. Bauhinia reticulata (in the north), Bauhinia Thonningii (in the south).

(nyama fu) out of which were woven the first fishing nets, the first sling, and the first loincloth (2).

2. The Dogon also mention this fiber as the first material used by men. With them as with the Bambara, it has a ritual function. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 26.

When they began to work the soil, they developed a set of primitive wooden tools. At the same time, they invented a throwing weapon made of the same material. Wood remained in use for a long time; the invention of weaving and crude pottery goes back to this period. Later, they came to know stone tools, iron, and the forge. The art of house building, about which no myth has been gathered until now, seems to have developed much later, after the discovery of iron (3).

3. Certain parts of the investigation concerning technology have been summarized by the author in "l'Arme et l'outil chez les anciens Bambara /Weapons and Tools among the Ancient Bambara/," Africa, Vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 105-111.

The study of this assemblage of tools and of their ritual use is most suggestive because they are a first indication of technological

773 224 411 Propitiatory sacrifices were offered on the wooden lamellae and the blood ran along the thong into the net. In addition, the hunter would saturate his weapon with the blood of wounded or killed animals to give his contrivance the victims' strength and to increase his own skill.

The ndõfere was used for a long time as a military weapon.

Weaving

773 286 The invention of weaving is linked to the discovery of cotton cultivation. The latter appeared long before that of millet at a time when the only known tools were those of wood used to scratch /103/ the earth at the base of the wild grasses with which men nourished themselves (1).

[171]

1. See p. 154. The Dogon admit the same priority of weaving over cultivation of cereal grains. See M. Griaule. Dieu d'eau, pp. 31ff.

The myth mentions simultaneously the appearance of cotton and the invention of spindles and shuttle; it does not mention the loom which appeared later. The tale of the manufacture of the first clothing also includes details on dyeing which seems to have been known at a very early date.

When the men returned from the bush where they had been cultivating the norolã̃ sise (commonly known as cram-cram) and the narakata, a kind of couch grass which provided them with edible seeds, they would often abandon their wooden hoes at the crossroads in honor of the Soba spirit.

One day an old man who used to pass nearby was summoned by the spirit, saying: "To all of you who leave your hoes as you pass by, I wish to give something to hide your nakedness; but I will do it if you offer me a sacrifice."

The old man reported this incident to the men of his generation, who decided to sacrifice an albino at the crossroads. The spirit then told them to take the seed which they would find at the intersection of the roads and taught them how to sow and harvest it.

304 561 881 Sistrums, sticks, mats, as well as the wood from the huts and the refuse that has been carefully swept up, are put in a pile which is ignited. Each circumcised boy jumps over the fire three times and then runs to his home without looking back. In this way he finally loses the rest of the wanzo which he has kept after the operation. Only his cap is brought back and given his mother who keeps it until her death. On the next day, after putting on new clothes the boy is taught what he himself is in the following words: "the person is yo and yo is the person (1)" and in the circumstances of creation. He is

1. Ma ye yo ye, yo ye ma ye.
On yo see pp. 18-26.

then admitted completely into the society of the male adults of his village.

Circumcision has a profound effect upon the person. At this moment, the child loses the physical support of the female sex which is the foreskin; he becomes a man (vir) ready to fulfill his role of a male capable of reproducing. Moreover, he "throws off his wanzo" which escapes from the body at the moment of the operation (2). In his

2. Wanzo file la. The wearing of clothing and ornaments assumes great importance in the loss of the wanzo. Among the Bozo, where the children are circumcised very young, they are not considered to have lost their wanzo until the moment these clothes are given to them.

[171]

leap above the fire this force joins, in the altars and the mask of the ndomo, the forces of both the uncircumcised and the circumcised of the preceding years (3).

3. See p. 227.

At the same time the circumcised boy improves his tere, for this latter force, diminished by the bloody operation, increases at the moment when the child dons his new clothing. Until his circumcision, the child only performed minor tasks; after circumcision he is considered a male adult and officially admitted to the rituals and labors of the community.

knowledge. However, the same effort would have to be undertaken with regard to their neighbors so that gradually from one tribe to the next, it can be extended to the whole Black world.

For it is true that, however indispensable it is to order the facts concerning the Bambara themselves and to seek an internal explanation, the comparative method is necessary for the understanding of a religion. This method imposes itself with particular force in this context. The Bambara system does appear to be, on the one hand, the original synthesis of several other systems found by them on the spot at the time when they made their ultimate settlement, or brought along at the time of the great migratory movements. On the other hand this system is in a state of perpetual symbiosis with those of other Sudanese peoples, as is proved indubitably by recent observations.

At present we can already state that at least nine tribes of varying importance (1) live on the same metaphysical, if not religious,

1. In the order of increasing depth of studies, we cite the following groups: Dogon and Bambara, blacksmiths, Kouroumba (or Foulsé), Bozo, Manding, Samogo /Samoro/, Mossi, Koulé, altogether amounting to more than two million people. It is fitting to note likewise that several tens of peoples or tribes of the Sudan (in the wider meaning of the word) consider themselves of the same origin. Important rituals, materials, agents, and places reinforce this belief (see p. 2).

foundation. They have a common theme of the creation by means of a word, which is originally motionless and whose vibration determines little by little the essence and later the existence of all things. The same is true of the movement of the universe in a conical spiral which is constantly extending itself. They share the same conception of the person, as well as of the primordial duality, the expression of perfect unity. All these peoples admit the mediation by a hypostasis of the divinity which sometimes takes on the aspect of a redeemer, master of a world, whose appearance is everywhere identical. All believe in the necessity /229/ of universal harmony as well as that of the internal harmony of beings, both being related. One of the

121 corollaries of this notion is the subtle mechanism of disorder which we
171 call impurity for lack of a better term, and which goes hand in hand
179 with that of highly developed cathartic practices.

Finally, all these offer an extraordinary efflorescence—not to be called abuse—of the spoken, written, drawn, or gesticulated symbols many of which are found everywhere, each one of them being the basis for several levels of images.

We may therefore speak from now on of a Sudanese civilization whose substratum may be discerned among many tribes as it has been among the Dogon and the Bambara in particular. Under the diversity of languages and institutions is hidden the same framework of representations. It is as though each tribe had arranged the designs characteristic of its own genius on an identical canvas.

For this reason, it is appropriate to consider the present essay as a 121 first step toward an understanding of this civilization. In the future, this vast entity will have to take its place in relation to the Mediterranean and Asiatic system. And there is no doubt that this search for its position will bring up problems of borrowings, migrations, and assimilation. And doubtless, too, an anatomy of the old civilizations which had taken refuge in the western impasse in Africa will throw a valuable light on the primitive organizations which were found in contact with each other during the high period in these regions, and which were able toeffect a union between indigenous ways of thinking and others with which we are more familiar.

It is tempting to reconstruct archaic states of humanity with the help of broken potsherds or literary shreds. In the more favorable cases, abundant texts and materials have permitted syntheses, whose vicissitudes are one of the reasons for the existence of erudition. On no occasion has anyone ever been discouraged by terrains without echoes, by the absence of the authors of texts and materials. Thus, a wealth of activity concerning the situations and thoughts of ancient times was instituted, a kind of science shrouded in silence where the spirit of research alone was alive.

Today it seems possible, in the light of new observations, to find among numerous and diverse living people, archaic forms and wellsprings common to men of another color living in another time. This does not imply that one should disregard the cautious advice given by the men of the old schools (1); but this advice rests /230/ on postulates

*173
175 came, everyone was astounded to see him leave everything for the birds.

The oracle was fulfilled at once. Biton ruled from Timbuktu to the Atlantic. And the dyeli, Karé Tammoura, who told me the legend, adds that thereafter there was a very strange thing at Ségou: a combination animal and plant which the Bambara called Sanu-so or "golden horse." Ahmadou, the son of Omar, had a mosque erected on the spot where Sanu-so was wont to appear but, all the same, it did not disappear until the arrival of the French. Even since then, there are those who say that on certain days strange lights appear at the spot on the Niger where Monseigneur Hacquart died and where the genie appeared to Mamari.

● [171] This fable about a local genie is not in itself remarkable, but when compared to the legend about Ngolo Dyara (see later, p. 51) and to many other similar ones current in the Sudan (2),

2. See, especially, the legend of Ndyadyane Ndyaye in "Légendes et coutumes sénégalaises [Senegalese Legends and Customs] by H. Gaden, 1912, and the "Dyide de Djenné" in Contes du Sénégal et du Niger, by Zeltner.

what it really is becomes clear: the figurative expression of a native mentality about which the European is usually very ill-informed and which deserves to be noted here briefly.

778 [23] Anything that departs from the average, the ordinary, or the normal -- power, wealth, success, ... illness, poverty, misfortune -- to any extraordinary degree or in a suspicious way, is, for the Bambara in particular and for the Black in general, the manifestation of an occult force acting either spontaneously or after provocation.

643 That is why, in the eyes of a native, a chief (a paramount 778 chief, of course) is out of the common run, not so much because of the position he occupies as because of the magic powers attributed to him (1). Power is merely the reflection of his

881 evil genii in order to preserve the "people of the soli" (soli-ma-u)
789 from their bewitchments.

881 The soli. The soli, this make-believe birth, is marked
304 by a bloody operation, circumcision for the boys and excision for the girls. The fact that the ceremony does not get its name from this operation demonstrates that it is merely show; it is merely a rite of separation between the previous state and the new one (3). The operation takes place at dawn.

[71]

3. That is why among other peoples the operation does not exist or represented by a mere slash on the thigh (among the Koniagui).

Boys. The blacksmith who is to circumcise the boys waits outside the village under a tree. Assisted by members [243] of the sects and especially by the Komo-tigi, he performs the operation behind a loincloth hung up as a screen. The boy stands erect, and the blacksmith draws out the prepuce and cuts it off, after having determined approximately the proper place to cut. The patient is expected to show no weakness; on the contrary, he exerts himself to say a few words to show his courage.

As soon as the operation is finished, a gunshot announces the news to the elders crouched about the village fires, and a female griot proclaims it to the bystanders. The Komo-tigi takes a few nyanka leaves, burns them, and goes to place the ashes on the boy's familial kara. The boy runs off to rejoin his companions under the tree especially chosen for this reassembly. All the boys will spend their days there, on the fringe of society with which they are forbidden to mingle. They return to the village only at night, to sleep in a hut reserved for them.

881 A man reputed to know how to care for circumcised
304 boys lives with them, takes care of them, and closely supervises
292 them; this is the sema-tye. Every day abundant food is brought to him for his patients. The latter wear a dloki (blouse) and kursi (trousers) made of cotton cloth, blue or yellow-brown (basa) depending on their affiliations (1), and their headgear is usually

1. The basa color is much in demand

881 301 and friends have kindly lent for the occasion, they advance shyly. In some areas, notably in the Bani region, they wear bundles of cowries, from the bride price already paid for them, around the hips and hanging on each side of the head (1).

[302 171]

1. Bambara girls who have gone through the soli have their heads shaved. Among other peoples, on the contrary, girls have their hair braided like women for the first time, but to the braid is added a tuft of the hair shaved off seven days after birth; this hair has usually been lost, but a small tuft is made to simulate it.

881 [535] Boys and girls, following the old women who lead them, dance around the orchestra, and then all sit down in a circle. The nyana-n-son-na-ba takes the floor. He speaks in a low voice, and, as is proper, his words are repeated in a loud voice by a herald. He proclaims the end of the soli, recalls its principal events, and indicates clearly which children have participated in the rite; each boy and girl is specifically named. He will also be sure to point out that the soli is an immemorial custom among the Bambara and that there is no worse insult than to [578] treat a Bambara as uncircumcised. He closes by inviting everyone to eat, drink, and celebrate in the joy and harmony appropriate to such a festival.

[535] Dancing is resumed, and the boys and girls of the soli take part. The festivities continue as long as the refreshments last, usually several days.

To end it all, no one leaves without giving at least a few kola nuts to the heroes of the festival, the boys and girls.

The last phase is the thanks given by the soli-ma to those who assisted at the da-woro. In noisy bands, boys and girls dash about the village in two distinct groups. The girls' group is headed by the soma-moso who is called masa (queen), followed by the masa-ma-kono (vice-queen) and the masa-ma-kono-segere [248] (follower of the vice-queen); the last girl in the

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575 association, each fula-ni is a ton'-den'.

The bachelors and some of the married men regard the fla-n-ton' simply as a means of having a good time in the company of boon companions. Anything brought by an individual member goes to swell the common fund which is most often used to organize feasts and drinking bouts. At these banquets, it is customary to comply with rules which appear curious at first sight and which must be obeyed unless the member wants to pay a fine into the common fund. Thus, anyone who acts on his own prior to or contrary to an order from the ton-tigi, anyone who comes or leaves, blows his nose, [250] spits, sneezes, and so on, without permission, is fined. Aside from the profit to the common fund, the procedure has its uses in making the ton-den' amenable to discipline.

In principle, the treasury of the fla-n-ton' is supposed to be used only to succor poor, embarrassed, or unfortunate members, who are expected to repay with interest insofar as they are able to do so. In theory, also, all of the ton-den' can count on moral and material aid from their fla-ni whenever there is need for it. It goes without saying that this fine spirit of altruism is rarely put into practice.

The fact of the matter is that the young masters (kamale-u) make use of the organization to resist the omnipotence of the elders (koro-u); malcontents of all sorts take refuge in it; adventurers find it useful in promoting their schemes. We shall see how the two most powerful Bambara empires were built on the fla-n-ton'.

2. General Considerations Concerning the Brotherhoods

Origin of the Brotherhoods

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794 There is no reason to suppose that the Bambara brotherhoods are not purely native institutions; similar organizations are to be found all over Africa, particularly in areas untouched by Moslem influence. All of them follow similar principles made manifest in ways characteristic of African occultism.

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794 There is no doubt, however, that in the case of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned this native foundation

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terms nyana and boli are used interchangeably. This is natural enough since the latter is merely the symbol of the former.

Each nyana has a boli which in form and substance is peculiar to it. Anything may be used to make boli: horn or hair of the hare, hind, or cattle; nails or claws; animal venom or excretions. It is not unusual to find parts of a human body put to use. As the chronicle tells, the war drums of the ton-dyon' were elevated to the rank of boli and were then adorned with the craniums and jaws of human beings sacrificed to them. Often the ball tied to the end of a piece of rope or leather and used to beat the tabala [Tr., big drum] is a human hand which has been severed and wrapped in a leather cover.

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Certain of the boli, particularly those of the Komo and the Kono, are said to be made of a child's torso; those of the Tyi-wara and Nama are made of wood, and those of the Duga of horn.

All sorts of shapes are employed: men, animals, doll-like figures, balls, small crowns, etc. The principal boli, called boli-de-n-fa, is accompanied by subsidiary ones called boli-de.

The boli is also given sex: one is male, another female; and it is said that there is a kind of mystical copulation [254] from which at the time of initiation are born the spiritual sons of the nyana.

Among boli should be noted those made of forked sticks, such as the n-Golo and the Tyi-wara, both patrons of brotherhoods of young men (1).

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1. If one makes certain comparisons, the forked stick seems to deserve special attention. Among the Khassonké, for instance, the soli-ma always build their seclusion hut (bire) with a forked post in the center. This post, called biri-makho (master of the hut), is a tree trunk chosen

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and cut by the gankurango (magician-protector of the soli-ma among the Khassonké) because it is so placed in the forest that the normal progress of the sun follows the axis formed by the two branches of the fork. There is thus some relation between the sun and the forked tree called biri-makho. Perhaps the same relationship accounts for the sleeping position of the boys in the bire: they always lie with their heads toward the center post and their bodies forming the spokes of a wheel around it. During the soli ceremonies the same Khassonké soli-ma use a short wand forked at one end.

The forked stick with mystical significance is also found among the Koniagui.

It is not possible, given the present state of our knowledge, to be specific about the origin or significance of this symbol. For the same reason, we cannot say whether it can be related to the lyre-shaped stones found in the mysterious collection of rocks discovered in Gambia, in which there is thought to be discernible a clearly defined cult of the sun (cf. Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F., 1920, No. 1).

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778 To the European these boli are thoroughly repulsive objects. Since magic utilizes everything (2), all kinds of things

2. And particularly things which are considered repulsive in ordinary life.

are used to make them, and during the sacrifices, blood, hair, feathers, viscera, etc., are usually placed on the boli. The result is usually a repugnant sight. The native, however, seems to pay no attention to this repulsive aspect which so horrifies

144 which encompasses all social, technical and economic activities" (1)
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1. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion], P.U.F., 1951.

of this people. The myths are "a sum of knowledge, wisdom, and not a series of fixed etiological recitations. One may say that they constitute a metaphysic including the knowledge of created things, as well as the principles of their state of being and of their action." (2)

2. Id., ibid.

171 Thorough investigation of other Sudanese peoples has revealed that the
771 Bambara religion is part of a pan-Sudanese system in which differences lie in the modes of expression and not in the essence of the thought.

A. Cosmogony

772 The Bambara conceive the world as a mass of active forces which man can influence. Thanks to certain techniques, the pivotal one being the blood sacrifice, man may amass or liberate these forces, may direct and orient them; in short, man may have a hand in the movement of the world and may aid it in its consciousness and accomplishment. This central role of man is explained to us by the order of creation itself, which governs all the rites to which man is subject. The Bambara conceive the world as having issued from an
773 original void which was endowed with movement (3): the gla. This

3. Passim, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

void emitted a voice which created its double, and from the couple came a humid substance, zo sumale (cold rust), which formed hard shining bodies. After a series of movements and transformations, there was an explosion between the two gla, which caused the ejection of a hard and powerful matter that vibrated as it fell. Out of this vibration came signs which settled on all the things as yet uncreated to designate them. Then, man's consciousness detached itself from the gla and settled on things to awaken their consciousness in naming them. In the

532 the masks is an entire world, and when it sets itself in motion in the public place, it dances the movement of the world, it dances the system of the world." (1)

1. Ibid., "Dieu d'eau" [God of Water].

A. Statuary

Sculpture is man's work, done by the blacksmiths. It is of religious inspiration.

There are three centers of fabrication, whose productions differ in their form. These are the regions of Bamako, Bougouni (a veritable land of blacksmiths), and Kinian, of which the latter covers part of the Sikasso, Koutiala, and Ségou districts. (2)

2. Passim, Lem, "Sculptures soudanaises" [Sudanese Sculptures], Arts et métiers graphiques, Paris, 1948.

They make female statuettes, fertility statuettes, marionettes 545 used for theatrical representations given by the young people, masks for the different societies, and, in particular, a whole series of stylized antelopes, special symbols of the tchi wara dancers.

"Like the Chinese sculptor of the Han period, the Bambara 532 sees and fixes forms in terms of profiles. He practices openwork ● 171 carving, cutting silhouettes which appear against the light as hieroglyphs with fixed and suggestive outlines. Giving interpretations to signs and forms borrowed from familiar animals, the Bambara combine and associate them to create figures emblematic of the tribe or clan, figures of recognition. This symbolic zoomorphism, the basis of heraldry, is that of the peoples of the great Asiatic steppe, that of the peoples of Mesopotamia and of Asia Minor; it was, in part, that of the Egyptians of the age of the Pharaohs who achieved in the valley of the Nile, predestined for this by its situation and its resources, the synthesis of a double culture." "Thus it is that the sculptor, in order to express his vision, often has recourse to the ideogram of geometric character, upon which is founded the conceptual character of the peoples of the steppe. (3)

3. Passim, F.H. Lem, Variété et unité des

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171 traditions plastiques de l'Afrique noire
[Variety and Unity of the Plastic Art Traditions of Black Africa].

532 A great variety of wood (4) is available to the sculptor, who

4. Passim, H. Lavachery, "L'art noir d'Afrique et son destin" [Negro Art of Africa and its Destiny], Présence africaine.

chiefly uses fine-grained species whose fibers are not very sensitive, and who avoids woods that are too hard and too dense. The artist [412] works with green wood, generally with an adze, or chip-axe, which probably is derived from the hoe. This instrument serves for rough chipping the mass and for establishing the secondary volumes; it gives the statue a singular "faceted" aspect. The work is completed [412] by means of a knife and gouges. A skillful technique makes it possible to give the wood a patina; it is blackened by burying the pieces in certain types of mud, by being immersed in palm oil, and daubed with lampblack. The wood is reddened by applying plasters made by grinding barks and making pastes from them. The objects so treated are [105] lengthily polished with skins and take on the sombre, brilliant aspect of old bronzes. The patina of the pieces is an important element of their beauty.

The art observes stylistic conventions, such as the deformation of normal appearances. In the structure of the mass, convention regulates the proportion of the parts, of the solid portions and the hollows; it regulates the development of the secondary volumes and of the surfaces of the different planes, their extent and their lines of contact. In its volume, the statuary obeys an almost immutable canon: to a cylindrical trunk is attached a head that is enormous in proportion to the other members, which are confined to narrow limits; the lower members are much shorter than in nature. The oversized head is a convention related to ancestor worship. The head is sculpted in concave style, and the entire figure is subordinated to a marked geometrization.

326 The blacksmiths also work gold by using the "lost wax"
531 method, or by hammering, embossing anf fixing thin leaves of gold,

614 825 784 given moment into a doe, toad, ant, or rabbit -- a singular evolution if ever there was one, one may suppose that at the moment of the metamorphosis these animals did not exist and they are all, men and animals, of the same flesh and the same blood; or, more plausibly, the ancestors changed themselves into already existing animals, procreating among them does, toads, ants, or rabbits as they had formerly reproduced human beings, so that in killing one of these totem animals a Redskin must always be afraid that he is killing a son or grandson of the ancestor, or some other of the latter's descendants, and therefore of his own flesh and blood (1).

1. /sic/ A. Lang does not seem to doubt that the people of whom he speaks -- Redskins, Tahitians, and Africans -- give a very broad meaning to the words "father," "mother," "brother," "wife," "son," and that they customarily use them to refer to persons with whom they have no bond of kinship.

[578] There is nothing like this for a Bambara. To call someone a wild animal is in his eyes an insult, and to call a man the son of a dog (oulou den) is enough to make him angry, to throw him into a fit of anger; even if he has a dog for a mé, that is a wrong which will sooner or later be avenged. He does not number among his ancestors a dog, or a panther, a lion or a snake. A Kouloubali would be much surprised to learn that a doe gave birth to him, and there is not a Tankara who thinks he has /18/ the sap of the dondol or the juice of its fruit in his veins. When a Djara calls himself the son of a lion, or a Dambélé the son of a big black monkey, what they say must be understood in a very broad sense, as an analogy. We ourselves say of a special benefactor: "He is my father," "he is my mother," "he is my all."

171 614 825 784 Here the Bambara is akin to the Christian Quichés of Guatemala of whom D. G. Brinton speaks in his "Nagualism," 1294, -- O. Stoll

171 614 825 784 in his Die Ethnologie der Indianerstämme von Guatemala /The Ethnology of the Indian Tribes of Guatemala/, Leyden, 1882. This work is cited by Lang in Chap. III of Mythes, cultes et religions. His tné is a friend, a protector, and may be defined as follows: it is an animate or inanimate being entitled to the respect and veneration of an entire lineage, family, or clan, in recognition of an outstanding service which has prevented the lineage, family, or clan from disappearing or becoming extinct, or has preserved them from a misfortune.

773 614 539 784 825 Every tne has its legend. Although in the mouth of the black man the tale may be embellished and decorated a little so that it varies somewhat, the substance remains the same. I will translate a few of these legends, preserving both their form and their substance.

Legend of the Two Kouloubali

The people were at war; everywhere there were only fugitives. The Kouloubali lineage had been cruelly stricken and reduced to two members, two brothers lost in the bush with their wives and children. The elder who followed /sic/ his brother at a distance, (since for fear of being surprised, they avoided camping in the same place). He arrived at the bank of a swollen river and saw he could not cross, there being no boats. "Where can I flee now?" he lamented. "I am in the hands of my enemies! For me and my family it is death or slavery." A mpolio was passing by; it heard, was touched by compassion, and, raising its big, bearded head out of the water, called to him: "I can take you over, have no fear!" The elder of the Kouloubali and his family, with their weapons and baggage, settled themselves on the slimy back of the strange fish and crossed the river. Then he said to the fish: "Listen, good mpolio, my brother and his family are over there on the bank. Do not render them the /19/ service that you rendered me, for he is an ingrate, one without a heart, and he might kill you." -- "Kill me? Come now!" and the fish dove, disappeared, and emerged far over near the other bank, at the moment when the young Kouloubali was wondering how his older brother had been able to cross such a wide

778 with the dancers /150/ who, with torsos naked to the waist, gesticulate and shout their sacred songs to the sound of drums and pipes:

778 539 A djigina so, gnâ, ma fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a e.
He is our guest, the gnâ, great killer of men, he is our guest tjon k'a é.
A fiérela ka dén, boli fiérela ka dén.
He has blossomed to bear, to bear his fruits; this boli has blossomed, he has his fruit.
Soubaou, yo, nin kéra malo ko ye.
Souba, yo, this is done because of shame.
Soubaya kéra, dabali bé an ko yé.
Someone has devoted himself to the practices of the souba, we have a means of saving ourselves.

778 782 Nor does sacrifice to the Nama fail to be impressive. Only members of the staff enter the enclosure where the beehive used as its tabernacle is located. The crowd of members remains outside, and no one approaches the palisade before it is his turn to give a sacrificial hen and kola nuts to the sacrificer. While the idol is being reddened with blood (1), /151/ two men, naked to the waist and facing the

778 ● 771 1. The Nama of the Malinké is absolutely identical with that of their Bambara brothers. At Bendougouba, a village of the Kosilanbougou culture near Kita, there is a Nama, and one can identify the words as they are very nearly the same.

Bambara	Malinké
Male Nama: Tjema	Male Nama: Kema
Female Nama: Mousoma	Female Nama: Mousoma
The Nama protects chiefly against initiates of the siri, who are said to eat human flesh and are called souba.	The Nama protects against the soubaga, identical with the souba. It comes from Misèngo in Bélédougou.

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The Nama comes from Misango, a province of Bélédougou.

The Nama is sometimes called Souyakoro, Namakoro, and its diamou, or lineal name, is Sirima-n-fign.

The palisade around the Nama is called djasé; the receptacle for the blood, da.

The horned pieces of wood are called wara se and gné bla, djenfa mousoou, djenfa tjeou, sometimes called waraou.

The master of the Nama at Misango, which is father of all /Nama/ is at present Tjema-n-djan; out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba.

There are three names for one and the same thing, say the Negroes of Kita: Souyakoro, Namakoro, and Sirimafing.

The palisade is called djasa; the receptacle, daga.

The horned pieces of wood are called gnâ bla and ko bla Wara, or Waradjeli or gnâ Wara.

Out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba (foura, "medicine"; tigiba, "great master").

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crowd, stand immobile on each side of the sacrificer and hold in their hands two pieces of wood about a meter long on which are tied three rams' horns (wara se) and two horns /sic/ (gné bla). It is an honor, even a distinction, to hold these horned pieces of wood, and these men are called djenfa tjéou.

Two annual sacrifices are offered to the boli of this group: one before the rainy season when, the Negroes say, the male and female idols mate, and the other about three months later, a little before harvesting begins when the grain is almost ripe. This is the time when the female idols give birth to their offspring, the best time to buy fetishes and to have fourou and konio made, because, as I said